

JONATHAN LEVENSHUS: Good morning. Hello, my name is Jonathan Levenshus, and I live here in Knoxville. I'm with the Sierra Club. I wanted to thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I also want to thank you for engaging the public in the process for updating the Federal Coal Leasing Program. These guidelines governing coal mining on public lands haven't been reviewed since the Reagan administration. Coal companies are taking advantage of these outdated federal rules to mine taxpayer-owned coal at cut-rate prices. This corporate giveaway costs taxpayers and state governments more than a billion dollars a year in lost revenues, money that could be used for local schools, roads, and infrastructure. These rules also help to prop up aging coal plants that dirty our region's air and water, and they distort the marketplace to keep low cost and high quality wind and solar power from competing on an even playing field. It is time to modernize this program. I have three specific recommendations. First: Phase out coal leasing on publically-owned land to better protect our climate and our health. Second: Incorporate the social cost of carbon into royalty rates so that companies pay for the right to mine taxpayer-owned coal. It will ensure a true cost of calculating the mining and burning of coal and what that cost imposes on society. And, finally, please examine how BLM's decision to lease taxpayer-owned coal affects wind and solar generation. The cost of these clean resources are plummeting, and in many parts of the country are now less expensive than fossil fuels. In conclusion, please ensure that energy development on our public lands continues in a way that protects taxpayers, our air and water, and smoothly transitions our communities away from coal. Thank you.